

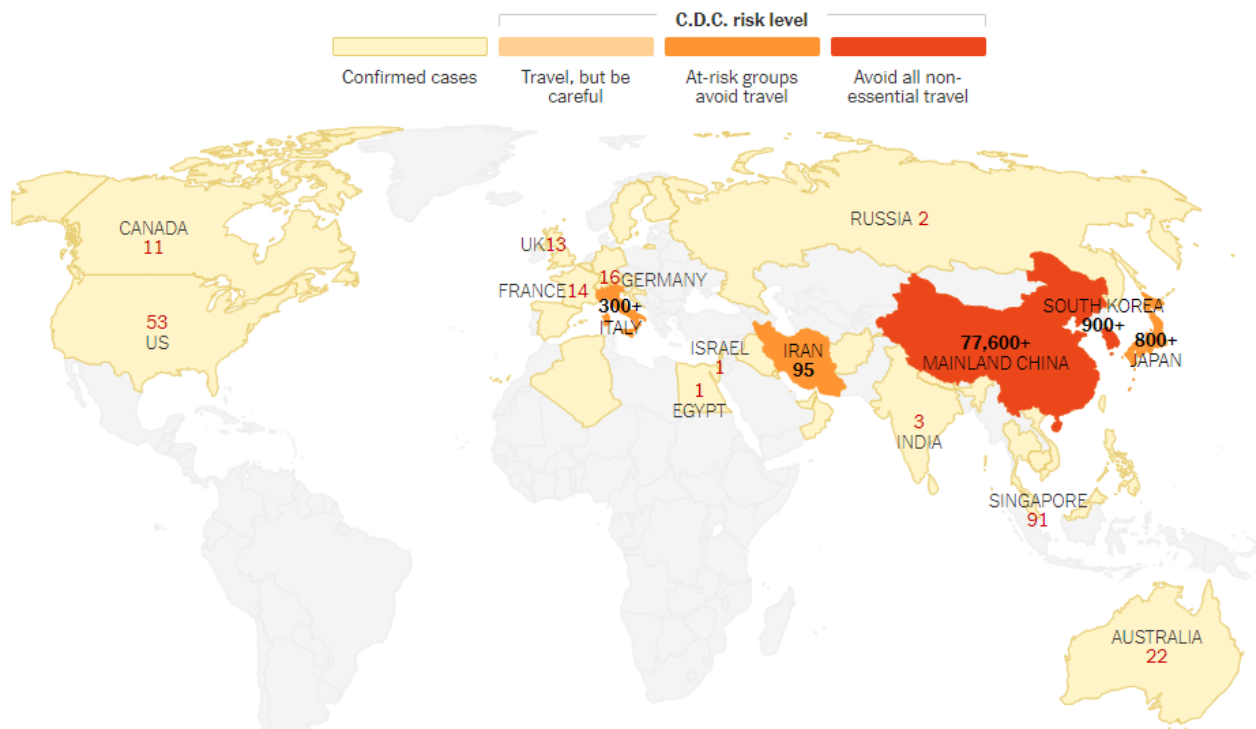


COVID-19: APAC Security Updates



SUMMARY

Nearly two months after the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak, verified cases have surged and deaths have far [surpassed](#) the mortality rate for the early 2000s SARS outbreak. Efforts to contain the virus have been effective at slowing the pace of the virus, but the minimal symptoms most patients (~80%) exhibit make it difficult to monitor; few cases place patients in critical care situations where the disease would be tested and reported. Containment efforts have included China's implementation of "closed management systems," which limit movement and public gatherings on a city-specific basis. Countries and airlines have imposed travel bans on travelers from China, as well as other countries that have begun to have more verified cases. While there is not yet a cure or vaccine for the virus, some drugs have worked in the laboratory and are now in use in Chinese hospitals. Various other potential vaccines are now in clinical trials, and may be ready for testing in the next few months. Additionally, Singapore has developed a [serological test](#) to establish links between cases, making it easier to track the spread of the disease.



Key Updates:

- The [State Department](#) has issued a Level 4 advisory advising against travel to mainland China, Level 3 advisories for South Korea and Mongolia suggesting travel be reconsidered, and Level 2 travel advisories encouraging increased caution when traveling to Japan, and Hong Kong. These remain the only countries for which COVID-19 has influenced State Department travel advisories in Asia.

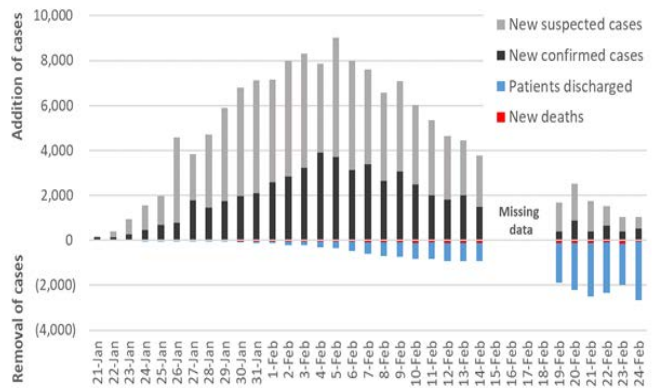


- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) has issued level 3 warnings against non-essential travel for South Korea and China, level 2 advisories for Japan, and a level 1 for Hong Kong. The CDC notes community spread for Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Thailand at levels neither sustained nor widespread enough to meet the criteria for a CDC advisory. These are the only CDC warnings for COVID-19 in Asia.
- Additionally, both the [State Department](#) and the [CDC](#) have advised against taking a cruise in the Asia-Pacific region.
- OSAC continues to provide and encourage reporting and highly active ongoing security discussions on COVID-19. For access, [join](#) the **Pan Asia Regional Council Google Group**.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC UPDATES

China

While China’s containment strategy has been somewhat successful, the economic costs are enormous, and it is among several countries are facing mounting pressure to resume normal operations. This past week, while cases and deaths outside of China are increasing, China reported a decrease in cases, indicating that more people recovered each day than there were new cases. The World Health Organization (WHO) sent a technical team to visit major cities in China. The team concluded that the epidemic peaked between January 23 and February 2, and has since declined. The team advised a measured return to normal, including resuming work and opening schools. The case fatality rate in Wuhan is 2-4%, but outside of Wuhan is only 0.7%. The team attributed the drop in cases in China to the aggressive use of non-pharmaceutical interventions and China’s “whole of country” approach. [Guangxi](#), [Jiangxi](#), and [Jiangsu](#) provinces have lowered their public health emergency alerts from Level I (most severe) to Level III and Level II respectively as of February 25. While Shanghai has mostly reopened public spaces and business including restaurants, supermarkets, and shopping malls, metro traffic is still quite low. In Beijing, the metro system is still imposing a 50-person limit to stations, and only allowing entry after screening. .



Mongolia

Mongolia has restricted travel significantly in an effort to stop the spread of the virus from neighboring China. Due to these restrictions, the State Department has issued a Level 3 advisory and authorized departure of non-emergency employees as well as family members from the U.S. Embassy. As of yet, there have been no verified cases detected in Mongolia. The government has preemptively limited flights to and from the country, prohibited inter-provincial travel, and closed all schools and universities until March 30. Authorities have banned all public gatherings and prohibited children from public locations such as restaurants and shopping malls.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is under a State Department [Level 2](#) advisory. The U.S. Consulate General has authorized the departure of non-essential personnel and their families from Hong Kong at their own discretion, but the Consulate remains open. The government has extended school closures, which started at the beginning of February, through at least April 20. The government has closed most of its borders with mainland China and Macau and implemented quarantines for those traveling from mainland [China](#) and [Korea](#). So far the Hong Kong Government's disease control measures have been effective as cases are mainly confined to small clusters. The hospitals have been providing effective treatment and equipment and health authorities have been open and transparent with information.

Detailed information on case histories for each patient in Hong Kong is available in a Hong Kong Government [database](#). OSAC detailed the private-sector response to the Hong Kong Government's increased security measures on February 14 (See [OSAC Benchmarking: COVID-19, February 14](#)).

Singapore

Singapore has raised its domestic Alert Level to Orange, third highest on a four-tier scale. There are still fewer than 100 verified cases of the disease in the country as of February 25, half of which have recovered; there have been no virus-related deaths. Travelers to Singapore should expect temperature checks at most businesses, including at restaurants and in shopping malls. Some locations will require individuals to complete a self-health declaration prior to entering the establishment. This will entail a few simple questions, such as any recent travel history to China and known recent close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. So far, Singapore has mostly been able to contain the virus. Singapore has some of the best medical care in the world, and a good detection and monitoring system.

DORSCON ALERT LEVELS (Disease Outbreak Response System Condition)				
	GREEN	YELLOW	ORANGE	RED
Nature of Disease	Disease is mild OR Disease is severe but does not spread easily from person to person (e.g. MERS, H7N9)	Disease is severe and spreads easily from person to person but is occurring outside Singapore. OR Disease is spreading in Singapore but is (i) typically mild (e. only slightly more severe than seasonal influenza. Could be severe in vulnerable groups. (e.g. H1N1 pandemic) OR (ii) being contained	Disease is severe AND spreads easily from person to person, but disease has not spread widely in Singapore and is being contained (e.g. SARS experience in Singapore)	Disease is severe AND is spreading widely
Impact on Daily Life	Minimal disruption e.g. border screening, travel advice	Minimal disruption e.g. additional measures at border and/or healthcare settings expected, higher work and school absenteeism likely	Moderate disruption e.g. quarantine, temperature screening, visitor restrictions at hospitals	Major disruption e.g. school closures, work from home orders, significant number of deaths
Advice to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories Comply with control measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories Comply with control measures Practise social distancing: avoid crowded areas

For additional information specific to Singapore, the country's Ministry of Health [website](#) provides daily updates. Additionally, the Singapore government provides [daily updates](#) through WhatsApp.

Korea

The State Department raised the travel advisory in South Korea to a [Level 3](#) after a large influx in cases and several deaths. The heart of the outbreak in Korea is the City of Daegu, where reports note that one secretive church sect encourages worship in such a way that the disease [spread easily](#) among parishioners. Members have been quarantined, but not before the disease began to spread. Currently, Korea has rated its outbreak as a Level 4 crisis alert – the highest level on a four-tier scale. The government issued this alert as a pre-emptive move, allowing it to limit public gatherings, force school closures, and prepare emergency mitigation measures. The government has asked all those in Daegu to limit travel outside their homes for the next two weeks; however, the government has made clear that there [will not](#) be the kind



of forced lockdown in Daegu that the Chinese government implemented in Wuhan. Some international schools have closed for the near future.

Additionally, several countries have implemented travel restrictions on travelers coming from South Korea, including mainland [China](#), [Hong Kong](#), and [Singapore](#). Like Singapore, Korea has an excellent health care system and the ability to test large numbers of people at once, which [could account](#) for the spike in case numbers.

While the State Department has raised its travel advisory for South Korea to a Level 3, there are no restrictions on travel between the U.S. and Korea, and the U.S. Embassy is operating as normal. The Embassy's Public Diplomacy section has created a [webpage](#) to provide updates on COVID-19 in Korea. If a person has symptoms in Korea, call **1339** and proceed to the nearest screening center. Follow [KCDC for regular updates](#) about the spread of COVID-19 in Korea.

Japan

The Department of State and the CDC have each raised Japan to a [Level 2](#) due to sustained community transmission of COVID-19 in Japan. Japan is facing the outbreak as it prepares to host the Olympic Summer Games, so it faces a unique set of challenges. Both the International Olympic Committee and WHO have been clear that there has been no decision to move or cancel the event. The virus has affected Games preparations, from postponing [volunteer training](#) to delaying or [limiting participation](#) in certain test events, in line with the Japanese government's efforts to discourage large gatherings. Additionally, the government has advised those with mild symptoms not to seek medical treatment, but instead to stay at home to avoid spreading the disease. The elderly and those with pre-existing conditions will be able to get [prescriptions over the phone](#) to minimize the risk of spreading the virus. On February 25, Japanese authorities urged employers to recommend telecommuting and staggered shifts to reduce potential exposure, and requested event organizers to reconsider or reschedule plans for large gatherings. If the number of patients in an area rapidly increases to the extent that it effects the ability of the government to monitor close contacts of the infected individuals, local authorities may ask the public to refrain from going out. [This database](#) provides the latest numbers of verified cases by province in Japan.

Cruises

The [State Department](#) and [CDC](#) each advise against taking cruises in the Asia Pacific region due to COVID-19. All passengers disembarked from both the *Diamond Princess* in Japan and the *Westerdam* in Cambodia, but not before the virus spread among passengers held in quarantine.

Travelers planning travel by cruise ship in Asia or elsewhere should be aware that many countries have implemented strict screening procedures to prevent the spread of the virus. This is a dynamic situation and travel restrictions may affect travelers' itineraries or ability to disembark, or may be subject them to local quarantine protocols.





Countries without cases?

Some countries in Southeast Asia such as [Indonesia](#) have reported no cases of COVID-19, despite having a large circulation of Chinese tourists. Only [two verified cases](#) have occurred on the entire continent of Africa, although there is also significant travel between China and many African countries. These countries may not have detected or reported cases; however, it is unlikely that the virus has not spread to these regions. The absence in reported cases has more to do with [poor detection systems than complete absence of disease](#). Countries where case numbers are high, like Singapore, Korea, and Japan have exceptional healthcare reporting capabilities. Additionally, unlike those countries that have reported outbreaks, underdeveloped countries may not have the resources to control population movement or provide proper medical care. The WHO has encouraged developed countries to do their best to control the spread of the virus in an effort to buy time to find a cure before the outbreak becomes more severe in developing countries.

Aside from underdevelopment, many of these countries are economically reliant on China and do not want to create any animosity towards China. Some of these countries have actively advertised not implementing travel bans, taking medical precautions, or banning Chinese tourists in an effort to show their support for China. Between development and political concerns, it is highly likely that the number of cases in Southeast Asia and Africa is **severely underreported**.

Resources

- [WHO Covid-19 Q&A](#)
- [IATA Travel Bans](#)
- [Global Database of COVID-19 cases and deaths](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION

For additional information on the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region, contact OSAC's [Asia-Pacific team](#), and join the [Pan Asia Regional Council Google Group](#).